

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 09736 251832Z
ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3071
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: IT, ZA, FR, BE
SUBJECT: ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY CRITICAL OF EUROPEAN
OPERATIONS IN SHABA PROVINCE

REF: ROME 9353

1. REPORTING AND COMMENTARIES IN THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST
PARTY'S (PCI) DAILY L'UNITA CLEARLY INDICATE THE PARTY'S OPPOSITION
TO THE BELGIAN-FRENCH MILITARY OPERATION IN THE SHABA PROVINCE.
TERMING THE COMBINED ACTION A DANGEROUS TURN IN THE CONFLICT
BETWEEN MOBUTU AND THE LIBERATION FRONT, L'UNITA (MAY 21) DEFINED
THE FRENCH-BELGIAN OPERATION AS ONE WHICH QUOTE HAS BECOME A MILITARY
INTERVENTION WITH POLITICAL GOALS END QUOTE. THE SAME
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PAGE 02 ROME 09736 251832Z

COMMENTARY TALKED OF A MISSION QUOTE WHOSE CHARACTER IS
DIFFICULT NOT TO DEFINE AS NEO-COLONIAL END QUOTE.

2. L'UNITA'S FACTUAL REPORTING ON SHABA DEVELOPMENTS HAS
UNDERScoreD THE ALLEGED DICTATORIAL NATURE OF THE MOBUTU
REGIME, MINIMIZED THE ACTIONS OF THE KATANGese REBELS, AND
SUGGESTED THAT SOME OF THE VIOLENCE ATTRIBUTED TO THE

REBELS WAS ACTUALLY CARRIED OUT BY THE TROOPS OF MOBUTU'S GOVERNMENT. THE NEWSPAPER HAS ALSO DEVOTED SPACE TO A CHRONOLOGY AND DESCRIPTION OF PAST EVENTS IN SHABA PROVINCE, INCLUDING ACTIONS LEADING UP TO THE MURDER OF KATANGAN LEADER PATRICE LUMUMBA, AND TO REPORTS STEMMING FROM WASHINGTON THAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION IS CONSIDERING THE SUPPLY OF ASSISTANCE TO REBELS OPPOSING THE ANGOLAN GOVERNMENT.

3. COMMENT. AS WE POINTED OUT IN REFTTEL, THE PCI, WHILE CONDEMNING THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT'S OFFENSEIVE IN ERITREA, HAS REFRAINED FROM ANY DIRECT MENTION OR CRITICISM OF THE SUPPORT WHICH THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS ARE GIVING TO THE MENGISTU REGIME. THIS CAN BE CONTRASTED WITH THE PROMPMT CRITICISM AND THE CHARGES OF NEO-COLONIALISM WHICH THE PCI HAS LEVELED AGAINST THE FRENCH AND THE BELGIANS (AND THEIR SUPPORTERS) FOR THEIR ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE REBEL ACTIVITY IN SHABA. GARDNER

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